

'Supertrucks' on order for firefighters

By SHARON CARRASCO
the little sentinel

WINTER PARK — The city has plans for a prototype fire truck that will combine firefighting and rescue operations into one unit.

Normally, fire departments have a pumper truck for responding to fire calls and a rescue vehicle for emergency medical calls.

But Winter Park has taken the first step to combine the two into a 'supertruck' that will be able to perform these and additional functions.

The city commission recently voted to buy two chassis at a cost of \$22,500 each for the new rescue pumpers. The chassis are scheduled to arrive in October when they will be fitted with bodies and stocked with fire and medical equipment and accessories.

The rescue-pumpers will be equipped with 1,000-gallon-per-minute pumpers, ladders, hose and a 500-gallon booster tank. A special compartment for advanced life support will be built behind the cab.

Completion of the rescue pumpers should be between 45 days and three months. The combination vehicle will cost about \$90,000 each or about the same price as a pumper.

Assistant Fire Chief Mike Molthrop, who developed the rescue-pumper idea, said it should save the city money because it will be two vehicles in one.

The fire department's policy requires that a rescue truck and pumper respond to every rescue call, which doubles fuel costs and maintenance and ties up two vehicles, he said. But the rescue-pumper will elimi-



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Molthrop looks over plans for proposed hybrid rescue-pumper vehicle.

nate the need for two vehicles to respond.

The rescue-pumper also will mean less personnel while improving the response time and having another rescue truck elsewhere, Molthrop said.

The two rescue-pumpers will decrease the fire department's vehicles from eight to six, leading to annual savings in insurance, fuel and maintenance of \$28,590.

"These trucks will pay for themselves times over," said Molthrop. "In fuel alone, for example, instead of running two trucks down the road, you just have the one.

"By placing the rescue-pumpers in service, the fire department would be able to handle two rescue calls

at the same time and still have two units available to handle a fire call," Molthrop said.

Dr. Frederic Wurtzel, chief of the emergency department at Winter Park Memorial Hospital, said the idea "deserves looking into."

"Frequently, the first responder to any emergency is the fire department," said Wurtzel. The fire department's paramedics stabilize the patient and Herndon Ambulance normally provides transportation to the hospital.

"On occasion, though, the fire department may have multiple victims or it is established that the patient is critical," Wurtzel said. "They could be transported immediately."